

MIAMI

Celebration at Scott-Carver site

■ The inauguration of 52 new homes on the old site of the Scott-Carver housing projects included former residents who have waited for years.

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Deshawn Simmons just wanted the keys to her new house. She wanted to go home, finally back to a place to really call her own, a new start eight years after being displaced from the Scott-Carver housing projects by a government plan gone wrong.

She had helped build this house. She nailed, painted, waxed the floors. At the dedication ceremony for the just-completed Habitat Homes community Saturday after-

noon in the heart of the Scott-Carver neighborhood, her wish came true.

She got her keys. Simmons, who put 250 hours of manual labor into her forest-green, three-bedroom house and some of her neighbors' homes, had no words when her name was called, only a loud, "Woooooooooo!" as she thrust her hand toward the sky.

"I'm just excited to get in," said Simmons, 38.

Hundreds of volunteers and new homeowners gathered to celebrate the completion of the last of the 52 single-family houses on the site where the Scott-Carver projects once stood, at the corner of Northwest 21st Court and 69th Street.

Simmons was among the hundreds of families forced to move from Scott-Carver when the Miami-Dade Housing Authority set in motion a plan to knock down the rundown barracks-style apartments and rebuild. Residents were promised that they could return once the construction was complete.

But the homes were never built and no one ever returned. Until now.

The celebration marks a new beginning for the neighborhood and its residents, many of whom never thought the day would come when they would have homes of their own.

County Commissioner Dorrin D. Rolle, whose district encompasses much of

the former Scott-Carver site, bought baskets of home-cleaning supplies for the new residents.

"This isn't even my election season," said Rolle, who acknowledged the long journey and hardships Scott-Carver residents had endured.

"Folks had a vision of rebuilding a community, and this is what you see," he said, as many in the crowd nodded in agreement. "Prior to what you're looking at today was some army barracks, that when you turned on the faucet, you had more centipedes coming out than water."

Donald J. "DJ" LaVoy, the department of Housing and Urban Development's administrator of the Miami-Dade



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COMING HOME: Former Scott-Carver resident Deshawn Simmons is all smiles before getting the keys to the house she helped build with Habitat for Humanity.

Housing Authority, "We are getting ready to announce plans for the start selecting developers for remaining vacant land — one rental housing for the lots just block north of the Habitat up the road," LaVoy said. development — formerly taken up by the projects. "Within the next year, we could start building."